

We claim:

1. A protected item comprising a generally enclosed space for containing an oxidatively labile substance, and attached in communication thereto an inert gas device for providing an inert gas blanket to said space to assist in protecting the oxidatively labile substance from oxidation.

2. The item of claim 1, wherein said device provides said inert gas which is enriched in or is pure nitrogen, ARGON OR CARBON DIOXIDE.

3. The item of claim 2, wherein said device includes a membrane for separating said inert gas from air.

4. The item of claim 3, which delivers to a place away from said space a gas which is enriched in or is pure oxygen.

5. The item of claim 3, which is a fuel tank.

6. The item of claim 3, which is an electrical wire raceway.

7. The item of claim 3, which is a hydraulic brake system, a tank for transporting a liquid fuel or combustible or oxidation sensitive reactant or solvent, and a combination thereof.

8. The item of claim 1, which is selected from the group consisting of a transmission box, a gear box, and a crankcase of an internal combustion engine; and the oxidatively labile substance is an oil or transmission fluid.

9. The item of claim 3, which is selected from the group consisting of a transmission box, a gear box, and a crankcase of an internal combustion engine; and the oxidatively labile substance is an oil or transmission fluid.

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10. The item of claim 8, which is said engine crankcase.
11. The item of claim 9, which is said engine crankcase.
12. The item of claim 4, wherein said place is selected from the group consisting of a carburetor, fuel injector, catalytic converter and a combination thereof.
13. The item of claim 4, wherein said place includes a pilot, driver or passenger cabin or compartment.
14. The item of claim 3, which is stationary.
15. The item of claim 14, which is a grain elevator or silo.
16. A method for controlling oxidative degradation of an oleaginous liquid substance in a generally enclosed space in a working machine, which comprises providing an inert gas blanket to said space.
17. The method of claim 16, wherein said oleaginous liquid substance is an oil or transmission fluid, and said machine is selected from the group consisting of a transmission box, a gear box, an internal combustion engine, and a combination thereof.
18. The method of claim 17, wherein said inert gas which is enriched in or is pure nitrogen.
19. The method of claim 18, wherein said inert gas is provided from separation air with a membrane-containing device.
20. The method of claim 19, wherein said oleaginous liquid substance is an engine oil; said machine is the internal combustion engine, and it is necessary to change the oil only after twenty thousand miles of use or more.